is monitoring the prices with a view to ensuring price stability through such measures as are feasible and necessary.

High heavy metal content in herbs exported

295. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian herbal exports often face rejection on grounds of high heavy metal content and the presence of other unwanted ingredients; and

(b) if so, the details of action taken by Government to prevent such rejection due to high heavy metal content?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Occasionally herbal products have faced rejections due to heavy metal levels being higher than the pharmacopoeia limits. Ayurvedic Siddha and Unani (ASU) medicinal herbal products may naturally contain purified metals as ingredients and such products need to be assessed differently due to fact that the presence of these minerals and metals contribute to the therapeutic efficacy as prescribed in the Ancient pharmacopoeia of ASU products.

Government of India has initiated awareness programmes for educating the industry through its Export Promotion Council, Pharmexcil. Besides, Government has introduced mandatory testing of metals in all purely herbal ASU medicines for exports w.e.f. 01.01.2006 onwards Testing facilities for ASU drugs in the country have been strengthened by upgradation of State Drug Testing Laboratories and accreditation of private drug testing laboratories.

Trade with Gulf, Western Asian and African countries

†296. SHRI JAI PARKASH AGGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the extent of trade carried out by the country with the Gulf, West Asian and African countries;

(b) whether Government propose to hold talks with Gulf Co-operation Council on Free Trade Agreement and with West Asian and African countries on Investment Promotion Agreements; and

(c) if so, the details of the benefits derived as a result of these agreements?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Total trade carried out by the country with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, West Asian and African countries during 2006-07 was (Source-DGCIS)

(i)	African countries	:	US$24988.25 mn.
(ii)	West Asian countries (excluding GCC countries)	:	US$21624.45 mn.
(iii)	Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries; Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE	:	US $ 47361.88 mn.

(b) and (c) First round of negotiations with Gulf Cooperation Council on Free Trade Agreement was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 21-22 March, 2006. The response of GCC Secretariat for convening the 2nd round of negotiations is being awaited. Government has signed bilateral investment promotion and production agreement with Sri Lanka. The agreement has

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

also been signed with Ghana but it is yet to be rectified. Agreements with Algeria, Bangladesh, Iran, Guinea and Senegal are under process. It is too early to assess the benefits of these agreements.

Setting up of Leather Industry Parks

†297. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have proposed setting up of five leather industry parks in the country;

(b) if so, the name of the cities where Leather Industry Parks will be set up;

(c) what schemes have been formulated by Government for providing employment to maximum people in these parks; and

(d) what is the maximum number of persons likely to get employment in these parks and what steps have been taken by Government for simplification of export of leather products?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) The Government proposes to set up three leather industry parks in the country.

(b) One each at Irungattukotai and Chennai in Tamil Nadu and one at Kolkata in West Bengal.

(c) The basic objective of the scheme is to provide the basic and essential common infrastructure like design studios, common facility centre, display-cum-warehousing facilities for housing large manufacturing units which would *inter aila* provide employment to large number of people.

(d) Around 7000 people are likely to get employment in these parks. The entire leather sector is now de-licensed and de-reserved. Import-export procedures have been simplified facilitating quicker customs clearance.

Plethora of regulations for foreign entrepreneurs

298. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the World Bank's recent report mentioning about existence of plethora of Government regulations that foreign entrepreneurs have to cope with while doing business in India;

(b) if so, when the reforms being undertaken in this regard will fructify as we are even much behind the pace of such reforms done in China; and

(c) will time-bound reforms be done so that in foreseeable future, the tedious red-tape no longer adversely affects our business scenario?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir. The World Bank has been publishing for the last five years, a report titled "Doing Business" comparing countries in terms of ease of doing business on various parameters.

In "Doing Business 2008", 178 economies have been compared and India has been placed at 120th position. The report ranks the economies in ease of doing business based on studying ten parameters namely; Starting a business, Dealing with licenses, Employing workers, Registering property, Getting credit, Protecting investors, Paying taxes, Trading across borders, Enforcing contracts and Closing a Business.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi